



## ***An Alternative to Nationalism: The Kurdish Movement in Turkey***

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**Abstract:** This paper will analyse the Kurdish movement's embracement of democratic confederalist ideology from a security perspective. The purpose of this study is to understand why the Kurdish movement turned from ethno-nationalism to an anti-statist ideology. I argue that the Kurdish movement embraced democratic confederalism in a bid to facilitate the de-securitization of the Kurdish issue. The Kurdish movement in Turkey was born as a nationalist, anti-colonialist independentist movement. The Turkish Government responded to the Kurdish issue by securitizing it and hence, considered only military responses to address its long-standing minority issue. However, in the 2000s, the Kurdish movement embraced democratic confederalism, an ideology that rejects nationalism and separatism, in favour of local self-government within existing state borders. Through this attempt to relocate the Kurdish issue from the security sphere to the ordinary political sphere, the Kurdish movement hoped to achieve a political settlement between the Turkish government and the Kurds.

**Keywords:** Kurdish Question – PKK – Nationalism – Securitization

**Parole chiave:** Questione curda – PKK – Nationalismo – Securitizzazione

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper will approach the Kurdish issue by employing the security framework. Securitization is when «an issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure» (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998, pp. 23-24). By analyzing both primary sources and academic literature, I argue that the Kurdish movement tried to relocate the issue from the security sphere to the ordinary political sphere. The Kurdish movement embraced democratic confederalism, an ideology that rejects nationalism and separatism, in favour of local self-government within existing state borders. Through this attempt, the Kurdish movement hoped to realize the possibility of a political settlement between the Turkish government and the Kurds.

Within the securitization framework, security is not objective but constructed. By naming any political issue a security problem, the state can claim a special right to



«take politics beyond the established rules of the game and frame the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics» (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998, p. 23). The action and the discourse set by the ruling political elites determines when and which issue becomes a security problem. (Waever, 1995, p. 54).

Although the securitization framework has European origins, it can be used to understand Turkish elites approach to the Kurdish issue. Securitization theories were developed by the Copenhagen school of International Relations to analyze the end of Cold War in Europe and the integration of EU states into the European Union (Waever, 1995) (Waever, 1998) (Waever, Buzan, & Lemaitre, 1993) Critics argue that the framework can be used to interpret the state-society dynamics in Europe, but may not be an useful tool for contexts with different state-society relations. Several authors pointed out these limits of the securitization framework, and of western-centric International Relations theories in general (Kanwal Sheikh, 2018) (Inayatollah, 2004) (Pasha, 2006) (Saurin, 2006).

However, Waever argues the concept of securitization provides the interpretative tools to analyse contexts where «security arguments are often (mis)used by rulers and elites for domestic purposes» and where «security rhetoric has been used repressively in the past» (Waever, 2004). Turkey is one the countries where the elites have used the securitization of political issues to limit civil society or to revert unwanted government policies, such as the recent government crackdown on the Gülen organization.

Moreover, military elites intervened directly into politics (coups of 1960, 1971, 1980, 1997, failed coup of 2016) against perceived and imagined threats against the state's integrity and Kemalist principles. (Bilgin, 2011, p. 406) The army is the «self-appointed guardian» of Atatürk's legacy of Kemalism, a set of principles<sup>1</sup> designed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to guide Turkey's top-down modernization and incorporated in the Turkish Constitution. (Karabelias, 2009).

Hence, concepts such as “securitization” and “de-securitization”, can be used to understand the political elites' approach to a wide range of issues, included the Kurdish issue.

## **THE SECURITIZATION OF THE KURDISH QUESTION**

The Turkish government has always addressed the Kurdish issue by securitizing it. This approach known as the “Sevres Syndrome”, derives from Turkish elites' imperative to avoid the repetition of the 1920 Sevres Treaty, which prospected

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<sup>1</sup> Principles of republicanism (*cumhuriyetçilik*), secularism (*laiklik*), nationalism (*milliyetçilik*), populism (*halkçılık*), statism (*devletçilik*) and revolutionism-reformism (*inkılapçılık*).



the partition of the Ottoman Empire and a separate Kurdish and an Armenian state. Although replaced by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, Turkish elites use the risk of a new partition to justify the securitization of the Kurdish issue. Moreover, this stance reflected Turkey elites' attempts to forcefully create a national identity during the first half of the twentieth century. As Turkey's political elites considered Islam as «an obstacle to the adoption of Western political, economic and social standards», they pursued the creation of a national identity based on Turkish ethnicity<sup>2</sup>. (Saatci, 2002)

However, Turkey counted significant minorities within its borders. The homogenization attempts thus included the eradication of non-Muslim minorities, such as the Armenians in 1914-15, population exchanges with Greece and discriminatory taxes on non-Muslims of 1942 (Kasaba, 1997, p. 29). The government chose to «repress rather than [to] seek support and legitimization» (Barkey, 2000), so that the combination of the State's policies of assimilation and secularization provoked resistance among the largely conservative Kurds, who revolted in 1925 under Sheik Said<sup>3</sup>. For the following decades, the State enforced policies of forced assimilation<sup>4</sup>, and consequently «Kurds' demands for ethnic-cultural and political rights [have been] perceived, framed and presented as existential threats to the national unity and territorial integrity of the Turkish state». (Karakaya Polat, 2008, p. 78). The military, guardian of Atatürk's legacy, reiterated this principle on several occasions, as in their 2007 memorandum<sup>5</sup>: «Those who are opposed to Great Leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's understanding 'How happy is the one who says I am a Turk' are enemies of the Republic of Turkey and will remain so»<sup>6</sup>. As a result, in Turkey's south-east, state of exception has been in effect since the adoption of martial law in 1925<sup>7</sup> after the Kurdish Sheik Said Rebellion until today. (Kurban, 2013, p. 346).

According to the securitization framework, the definition of an issue solely as a security problem, «justifies extraordinary measures to deal with it outside the political arena. Therefore, the securitization process requires extreme measures such as repression». (Geri, 2017, p. 190) The main legislative tool employed by the Turkish Governments to securitize the Kurdish issue is the “State of Emergency”. The “State of Emergency” is allowed in cases of «serious

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<sup>2</sup> However, it must be noted that this concept of ethnicity does not revolve around blood, but culture. As explained by Ziya Gökalp, whose work informed Atatürk's nationalization efforts, the Turkish nation was not “a racial or ethnic or geographic or political group but one composed of individuals who share a common language, religion, morality and aesthetics, that is to say who have received the same education” (Saatci 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Although this revolt was initiated to restore the Caliphate, nationalist elements were also involved (Olson 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Supported by policies such as the 1934 Resettlement Law, which identified the areas to be Turkified and provided for the resettlement of Kurds into Turkish-majority areas (Nezal 1980, 57).

<sup>5</sup> The Turkish Army issued the 2007 memorandum against the AK Party's candidacy of Abdullah Gül for Presidency, perceived as an attempt to undermine Turkey's stream of secularism.

<sup>6</sup> BBC News. 2007. “Excerpts of Turkish army statement” *BBC News. April 28, 2007. Accessed June 30, 2018. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6602775.stm>*

<sup>7</sup> Law no. 785 of 3 March 1925 (Takrir-i Sükûn Kanunu).



deterioration of public order because of acts of violence [...] after consultation with the National Security Council (NSC) »<sup>8</sup>. Significantly, the NSC was also the institutional organ used by the Army to intervene in civil politics. The State of Emergency has been repeatedly employed since the beginning of the PKK's armed struggle. The insurrection challenged the State's monopoly of violence and its control over Kurdish populations, and it justified the protraction of the State of Emergency until 2002. During this period, the state of emergency emerged «as not solely a legal and administrative implementation but also as a continuous reflection of the Turkish *raison d'état* when it faces a crisis» (Bezci & Öztan, 2016) However, Agamben contends that the state of exceptionality, although defined by the law's boundaries, causes a blurring between the norm and the exception. Hence, every act of the State becomes framed in the context of emergency (Agamben, 1998, p. 165). Thus, violence and arbitrary acts became the state's only answer to the Kurdish issue.

As argued by Bezci and Öztan, «the sovereign distinguishes itself by defining the emergency as well as what should be implemented in times of the defined emergency», that is, the Emergency State contributed towards shaping the identity of the Turkish State. «In the Turkish case, the NSC designed and directed this process as the culminating mechanism of the *raison d'état*» (Bezci & Öztan, 2016, p. 176). Firstly, the state of emergency extended the local governors' powers and allowed them to employ the military for security operations in Kurdish areas. In addition to the police and the army, the State created the village guard system, which became responsible for widespread torture and killings. The village guard system was incorporated into Statutory Law and continued after the State of Emergency. This demonstrates the normalisation of the Emergency State outside the boundaries of a situation of crisis as violence became incorporated into regular law.

The war between the PKK and the state spiraled progressively out of control during the 1990s. The army developed a clandestine network of Counter-Terrorism units (JITEM), Islamists militias, village guards, and mafia members that murdered thousands of local politicians, intellectuals, journalists and common people. As a result, about 3000 villages were destroyed, 35'000 people died, and three million people fled. The chaos generated by security operations is summarized in Oktens words:

«It became impossible to discern who was responsible for which atrocity: guerrillas attacked villages, [siding] with the government, and they killed teachers, whom they saw as representatives of the Turkish state. [...] Village guards soon became semi-tribal bands. [...] As well as committing political murders, the anti-terrorism units expanded into drug trafficking. [...] Hundreds of Kurdish intellectuals, activist and PKK sympathizers were tortured and killed. [...] The

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<sup>8</sup> 1982 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, art.120.



army fought the PKK, but also burned villages and tortured their residents before forcing them to flee. [...] The cities were ruled by fear» (Oktem, 2011, p. 89-90).

The repression benefitted the PKK, allowing it to emerge as the only alternative to the State's violence. Furthermore, the State's repression justified the PKK's use of violence, as the State did not present any alternative political solution until the 1990s. In turn, the PKK's violence continuously justified the persistence of the Turkish Emergency State. Hence, the Emergency State created the conditions for its own preservation through the reproduction of the crisis.

The Government's recent repression pursued after the collapse of the peace process in 2015 confirm that securitisation is still the principle framework used to address the Kurdish issue. However, a military victory of the Turkish State would fail to address the Kurdish issue, because «Turkey's Kurdish problem has to do with the difficult question of how to politically organize a multiethnic and multicultural society without endangering the legitimacy of the polity and its state» (Keyman, 2012 ) In other words, the question is how to address the Kurdish issue, bring it back into the realm of politics and away from the realm of State security. The Kurdish movement claims that they developed the ideology of democratic confederalism as an attempt to resolve this difficult problem.

### **THE PKK'S STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE A POLITICAL SOLUTION**

The securitization of an issue takes it away from the realm of politics. As the state consider a particular issue a threat to its survival, every aspect of this issue can be defined only by the friend-foe dynamic. According to Waever, in such situations the task for minority leaders is «to turn threats into challenges: to move developments from the sphere of existential fear to one where they could be handled by ordinary means, as politics, economy, culture and so on» (Kymlicka, 2007, p. 193). The Kurdish movement engaged in such a task by redefining the movement's ideology and objectives.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) was founded by Abdullah Öcalan and other university students in 1978. The 1978 program defined the official position of the PKK for the following decades: Kurdistan was a semi-feudal colony ruled by four colonizer states. Turkey attempted to assimilate the Kurds and destroy their national identity through Parliamentary representation and the education system. Feudal landlords and the comprador bourgeoisie were agents of the colonizers and betrayers of their people. (Van Bruinessen, 1988, p. 42) Thus, the PKK's goal was to fight for Kurds' self-determination following the example of the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles of Vietnam, Angola and Cuba. (Cansiz, 2016, pp. 128-130)

The redefinition of the ideology of the PKK occurred throughout the 1992-1999 period, as the Kurdish struggle experienced two developments: on the one hand, the successes of the Turkish army against the PKK; on the other hand, the



growth of civil society organizations, which shifted the discourse on democracy rather than on socialism. The fall of Soviet Union had an impact on the PKK's practices and discourse, which was reformulated throughout the early 1990s. Firstly, the party criticized the real socialism experience while maintaining a socialist ideology. (Radu, 2001) This distinction allowed the PKK to develop a socialist discourse of its own, heavily influenced by Öcalan's thought. (Gunes, 2012, p. 127). Moreover, the first attempts by the Turkish government to find a political solution were met by Öcalan's declarations that it was possible to achieve Kurdish people's freedom without seceding from Turkey<sup>9</sup>. (Marcus, 2009, p. 212-214)

For this reason, the PKK put forward a strategy aiming to de-securitize the Kurdish issue and achieve 'legal-rational legitimation' through the intervention of European governments and civil society. For this purpose, Kurdish leaders founded the Kurdish Parliament in Exile in 1995 and held sessions in several European countries. The Parliament aimed to negotiate Turkish authorities, mostly with the purpose of securing international support for a political solution. The Parliament, dominated by the PKK supporters, never started peace talks with Turkey, but managed to win international support and strengthened ties with international organizations and civil society. (White, 2000, p. 178-179) Moreover, the establishment of a European network of Kurdish organizations whose focused on cultural and political rights, made relationships possible with the European Left. Gunes argues that the relationship with these organizations and parties fostered the developing of democratic practices within the Kurdish movement, playing an «important role in the shift to the democratic discourse» (Gunes, 2012, pp. 128-129)

The PKK's stance further developed after Öcalan's expulsion from his safe haven in Syria. The Kurdish leader landed to Europe claiming to have «a political aim» and proposing a new peace plan for Kurdish «autonomy without harming Turkey's borders». The sixth PKK congress formalised this proposal in 1999, repudiating terrorism (but not the armed struggle), and formalising the demands for autonomy inside Turkey (White, 2000, p. 183-185)

The capture of Öcalan accelerated the reorganization of the Kurdish movement. Although the PKK's congress had already officialised demands for 'autonomy' within Turkey, Öcalan's 1999 trial defence shocked the party's cadres. Öcalan's unexpected conciliatory and servile statements on 'protection of Turkey's integrity', his grief for the death of Turkish soldiers and his claims that Turkey had been respecting Kurdish rights aggravated the party's crisis<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> These short-lived attempts, carried out by the Turkish President Turgut Özal, were interrupted after Özal's sudden death in 1993.

<sup>10</sup> Several PKK commanders, included Öcalan's brother Osman, left the party and tried to create a new party to continue the nationalist struggle. However, their new PWD (Partiya Welatpareza Demokratik - Patriotic Democratic Party) never managed to gather adequate support and several of its members were killed by, presumably, the PKK.



Thus, the PKK endured a process of ideological and structural reorganization between 2000 and 2004. The movement «levelled down its demands, ceased military activities, withdrew the majority of its guerrilla forces from Turkey». (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2012, p. 9) However, the movement's ideological reorganization represented the most important development. While in prison, Öcalan changed the party's ideology by encouraging new forms of self-government based on democratic confederalist principles. Rooted in feminism, ecologism, and anti-capitalism, these principles were inspired by a range of thinkers such as Murray Bookchin, Hannah Arendt, and Immanuel Wallerstein (Öcalan 2007, 2011 and 2013).

Öcalan defines Democratic confederalism as a

Non-state social paradigm. [...] [It] is based on grassroots participation. Its decision-making processes lie with the communities. Higher levels only serve the coordination and implementation of the will of the communities that send their delegates to the general assemblies.' [...] It is a natural right to express one's cultural, ethnic, or national identity with the help of political associations (Öcalan, 2011)

Öcalan presented this ideology as the result of an analysis of the history of the Middle East<sup>11</sup>, describing human history as a struggle between the forces supporting «state-based, hierarchical civilizations» and the communities resisting it. Moreover, Öcalan describes the ideology of the state as the final product of «mythological fabrications» that stemmed from the victory of patriarchy over the previous matriarchal «mythological discourse». According to Öcalan, the institutionalisation of «patriarchal and monarchic authority» proceeded hand in hand, so that patriarchy became an integral part the ideology of the state. (Öcalan, 2007) Öcalan considers the struggle against patriarchy as an integral part of Kurdish struggle. According to Öcalan, «capitalism and nations-state» are deeply interconnected with patriarchal power, which represents the primary source of «fascism and despotism». (Öcalan, 2011, pp. 16-17). For this reason, he developed the so-called “science of women” *Jineology*, that is, an effort to undo the «economic, social, political dimensions which made women the oldest colonized nation» by bringing «woman themes, questions and movements» at the core of political action (Öcalan, 2013).

On the organizational level, in 2005 the PKK became part of the KCK (Koma Civakên Kurdistan - Association of Communities in Kurdistan), a federation of military, political, and cultural Kurdish organizations organized according democratic confederalist principles. The KCK aimed to promote the self-government of the Kurds by creating new institutions, independent from the

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<sup>11</sup> Carried out in form of submissions sent to the European Court of Human Rights between 2001 and 2004.



state. In Turkey, the pro-Kurdish BDP and HDP<sup>12</sup> political parties, civil society organizations, religious communities, and women's and youth organizations all compose the DTK, local branch of the KCK. These organizations operate as a whole entity and share the same common ideology of "democratic confederalism". (Saeed, 2017) Their goal is to create a network of grassroots organizations and assemblies that bypass the Turkish Government's institutions by organizing 'democratic self-management.' (Tatort Kurdistan, 2013, p. 1.1)

The Congress proclaimed 'democratic autonomy' in 2011, declaring the 'solution' to the Kurdish issue was not within the central government, but through «councils that give locals a voice in the administration» and encouraging locals «to create their own democratic organization, [dealing with issues ranging] from health to education, culture to economy»<sup>13</sup>. These councils are organized so that decisional power stems from the bottom-up locals from a countryside village or from a city neighbourhood meet to decide on local issues; elected village/neighbourhood speakers meet with other speakers in monthly assemblies. Local speakers, along with 'members of the other councils as well as opinion leaders, workers, local management, women, youth and representatives of nongovernmental organizations' compose the Provincial General Assembly, which coordinates commissions in the areas of self-defence, religion, women, youth, culture, arts economy and justice<sup>14</sup>.

The pro-Kurdish parties function as 'transmission belt' between the DTK system and the State system, as they represent Kurdish people in both sites. Thus, the elected mayors and representatives are fundamental for the effectiveness of democratic autonomy at the operational level. A 2011 field research shows the DTK assembly's decisions were implemented in BDP-run<sup>15</sup> city administrations. The councils, 'made up of the mayor, the regular municipal government, and various organizations, societies, and NGOs' transmitted their decisions to the municipality. Hence, these councils did not replace the local administrations, but rather constituted an additional source of legitimisation for the municipalities. Thus, the Kurdish movement created a new administrative system capable of functioning alongside the Turkish State structure (Tatort Kurdistan, 2013, p. 1.2).

Öcalan's goal was to create a coherent alternative discourse and to provide an ideological justification for the ideological and organizational restructuring of the Kurdish movement. The KCK's charter officialised that «The self-determination of Kurdistan [does not mean] to establish a nationalist state but to establish its

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<sup>12</sup> The HDP (Halkların Demokratik Partisi) is a pro-Kurdish, leftist party. It won 10,7% of the votes in the 2015 parliamentary elections.

<sup>13</sup> Bozkurt, Goksel. 2011. "'Democratic autonomy project' launched in Turkey's Diyarbakir." *Hurriyet Daily News*. February 24. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/democratic-autonomy-project-launched-in-turkeys-diyarbakir.aspx?pageID=438&n=8216democratic-autonomy-project8217-launched-in-diyarbakir-2011-02-24>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>15</sup> BDP, Peace and Democracy Party was the main pro-Kurdish party between 2008 and 2014.



own democracy that will be grounded on no political borders». (Kekevi, 2015) Moreover, the KCK produced the 'Declaration for a democratic solution and peace' in 2010 to set its goals for a peace process with the Turkish government<sup>16</sup>. The Declaration advocates for a peaceful coexistence on equal grounds of Turks and Kurds within Turkey's national borders and full political and national rights for the Kurdish organizations.

### **CONCLUSIONS: IS IT REALLY POSSIBLE TO DE-SECURITIZE THE KURDISH ISSUE?**

The Kurdish movement changed deeply after 1999. It restructured its ideology, declaring that it would not seek independence but autonomy within the existing state borders, and embraced democratic confederalism. Can this lead to a de-securitization of the Kurdish issue?

As explained by Waever, an issue does not constitute a threat to security *per se*, but only if it is constructed as a threat. (Waever, 1995) In example, Turkey's elites engaged in a process of de-securitization of several issues during the last two decades, namely: the relationship with the neighbouring EU states (primary with Greece), the status of Cyprus, the relations with the neighbouring Middle-Eastern states and the Kurdish issue. Scholars showed that, from the late 1990s until the 2010s, the officialization of Turkey's candidacy to the EU led to a process of de-securitization of these issues. (Kaliber, 2005) (Aras & Karakaya Polat, 2008) (Tocci, 2013) This was «the result of the EU accession process and the associated democratization, transformation of the political landscape, and appropriation of EU norms and principles in regional politics». (Aras & Karakaya Polat, 2008, p. 511) These developments had interconnected effects on both Turkish foreign and domestic policy. De-securitization allowed «a substantial increase in the flexibility of foreign policy attitudes and the ability of foreign policymakers to maneuver in regional policy» (Aras & Karakaya Polat, 2008, p. 495). The clash between the old Kemalist guardian-state and the rising Islamic-calvinist elite led by Erdoğan's AKP has been a constant since the AKP's party electoral victory in 2002. Therefore, the very act of subtracting these issues from the security sphere can be also considered as an empowering political strategy employed by the ruling party AKP in its confrontation with the military.

The EU accession process contributed transforming the mainstream discourse on the Kurdish issue, as Kurdish civil society groups became «one of the biggest supporters of the EU process». (Karakaya Polat, 2008, p. 79) New liberal legislations, a relaxation of security forces, and several PKK ceasefires (the first one lasting from 1999-2004) brought to a period defined "Kurdish spring" (2002-2006) (Oktem, 2011, p. 142). Although interrupted in 2006 by renewed clashes, urban life in the East began to thrive, and political and civil organizations

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<sup>16</sup> In the context of renewed peace efforts between the AKP-led government and the PKK.



operated freely. The government allowed Kurdish language classes, opened a Kurdish tv channel and ended emergency rule in the South-East. The peace negotiations that started in 2013 brought hope for a permanent solution of the Kurdish problem and fostered legitimacy for the Kurdish political parties.

During these years, the Kurdish movement set up the DTK and created a network of grassroots organizations following the democratic confederalist framework. These organizations operated freely without major interferences from the state<sup>17</sup><sup>18</sup>. However, the establishment of a PKK statelet in Northern Syria after 2012 became the main element defining the Kurdish question. Thus, «national worries and security concerns» replaced the «process of resolution and politics as the main focus of the Kurdish question» (Bayramoglu, 2015, p. 26) The Turkish government feared that a PKK entity in Syria would lead to losing control over its southern border. After the bombing attack in Suruc, which killed Kurdish sympathizers directed to Syria, and the renewed hostilities between the PKK and government, all the cities governed by Kurdish mayors declared autonomy from the state and «democratic self-defence against attacks» (Bayramoglu, 2015).

The collapse of the peace process led to the re-securitization of the issue. The resuming of military operations, the state of emergency and the curfews declared in the South-East after the breakout of the ceasefire with the PKK in July 2015 led the killing of hundreds of civilians and the destruction of Kurdish cities (International Crisis Group, 2018). The re-securitization of the Kurdish issue has also led to the repression of Kurdish political parties and civil society organizations. Since 2015, thousands of members of the HDP party have been arrested, including tens of MPs and the presidential candidate Demirtaş<sup>19</sup>, all considered as “terrorists” by the Turkish president<sup>20</sup>. To summarize, a «security-centric, antagonistic foreign policy» allowed Erdogan to increase popular support through a «racist, xenophobic and Islamist expansionist» rhetoric (Sezal & Sezal, 2018)

However, the securitarian approach does not come without heavy costs. According to Bilgel and Karahasan, Turkish economy had a 14% GDP estimated loss between 1988 and 2008 due to the conflict with the PKK. Conflict

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<sup>17</sup> Bozkurt, Goksel. 2011. "Democratic autonomy project' launched in Turkey's Diyarbakir." *Hurriyet Daily News*. February 24, 2011. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/democratic-autonomy-project-launched-in-turkeys-diyarbakir.aspx?pageID=438&n=8216democratic-autonomy-project8217-launched-in-diyarbakir-2011-02-24>.

<sup>18</sup> Safak, Timur. 2010. "Kurdish congress in Turkey seeks far-reaching autonomy." *Hurriyet Daily News*. October 19. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/kurdish-congress-in-turkey-seeks-far-reaching-autonomy.aspx?pageID=438&n=kurdish-congress-seeks-far-reaching-autonomy-2010-12-19>.

<sup>19</sup> Ahval News. 2018. *One in three HDP members detained over last 3 years*. 03 03. Accessed 05 18, 2018. <https://ahvalnews.com/hdp/one-three-hdp-members-detained-over-last-3-years>.

<sup>20</sup> Hurriyet Daily News. 2017. *President Erdoğan calls Turkey's jailed opposition co-chair Demirtaş a 'terrorist'*. 07 09. Accessed 05 20, 2018. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/president-erdogan-calls-turkeys-jailed-opposition-co-chair-demirtas-a-terrorist--115289>.



and instability resulted in forced migration, destruction of property and reduced local and foreign investment. (Bilgel & Karahasan, 2016) Moreover, the «securitization of minority nationalisms» has serious impacts on a country's democracy, because it «trumps normal democratic processes of debate and negotiation» (Kymlicka, 2007, p. 194).

The process of re-securitization of the Kurdish issue confirms Waever, Buzan and De Wilde's analysis of securitization as the domain of a country's ruling elite. Therefore, although the Kurdish movement's embracement of democratic confederalism constituted a pre-condition for the initial de-securitization of the Kurdish issue, the Turkish Government retains the power to decide which issue belongs to the political realm and which issue requires emergency measures. Although the Kurdish movement succeeded in being recognized by the Turkish government as a partner for the peace process, a changed political climate led the government to re-securitize the issue. The Kurdish case demonstrates that the securitization of a minority issue does not allow for a political solution and makes way only for military answers. Moreover, although a minority movement can modify its ideology and claims, the de-securitizing process always relies on the decision of the government.

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